

REMARKS:

The claims in the application are 1-33 and Claims 34-40 added by the present amendment.

Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

It is respectfully pointed out pursuant to a telephone conference with the Examiner in charge of the above-identified application, Claims 13-18 and 22-33 have been withdrawn from consideration (contrary to the statement in paragraph 1 of the Office Action). In any event, these dependent claims should also be allowable upon allowance of an independent claim. The Abstract has been formally inserted in accordance with the request in paragraph 2 of the Office Action and a replacement set of drawings enclosed in accordance with the request in paragraph 3 of the Office Action.

Dependency of Claim 12 has been changed to Claim 11 to eliminate the objection raised in paragraph 4 of the Office Action, while Claims 6 and 10 have been amended to eliminate the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, raised in paragraph 6 of the Office Action. In this regard, the claims have been amended for various formal reasons.

More particularly, new Claim 34 is directed to recitation deleted from Claim 6. Claims 19 and 20 have been amended into independent form. The amendment to independent Claim 1 herein finds explicit support, e.g., in the last paragraph on page 3 of the specification, while new Claims 35 and 36 also find support at this location and in the various figures and accompanying description in the specification. Claims 37-40 also find support in the respective figures and accompanying description in the specification.

Accordingly, the only outstanding issue is the art rejection of the claims.

Claims 1 and 5-11 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,419,983 to Kreuzer in paragraph 8 of the Office Action, while Claims 1-5 and 8-10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §§102 or 103 as being anticipated by or obvious over U.S. Pat. No. 5,088,176 to Koga in paragraph 9 of the Office Action, with Claims 19-21 rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as obvious over Kreuzer in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,673,153 to Ehrenleitner et al in paragraph 11 of the Office Action.

Ehrenleitner et al were patented January 6, 2004, and published May 15, 2003, with the priority PCT application published July 11, 2002, after the filing date of February 20, 2002 of the priority PCT application of the above-identified U.S. application; additionally, the priority PCT application of Ehrenleitner et al (WO 02/053482) was published in German, so Ehrenleitner et al do not have an effective 35 U.S.C. §102(e) date (M.P.E.P. §706.02(f)(1)). Therefore, Ehrenleitner et al cannot be applied as a reference against the present application, so the rejection of Claims 19-21 over this combination of art is improper. Claims 19 and 20 have been amended into independent form, in this regard.

However, it is respectfully submitted all pending claims herein are in condition for allowance, for the following reasons (reference will be made to preferred embodiments of the present invention illustrated in the drawings of the present application).

The present invention is directed to a device 10 for handling workpieces such as treating vehicle chassis 22 by passing the workpieces 22 through various treatment stations or handling regions 14 along a handling line 12, and which possesses improved

versatility, adaptability and efficiency in treating such workpieces 22 over prior art devices. These and other advantages are explicitly attained by the present invention as recited in independent Claim 1 and which is directed to the device 10 comprising first and second modules; the first module has a handling line 12 with one or more handling regions 14 for surface treating the workpieces 22 and a guide device 44 situated along the handling line 12; and the second module has one or more carriages 20, 40, 60 to which the workpieces 22 may be fixed and moved along the guide device 44.

More specifically, the first module is structured and arranged to cooperate and be combined with various types of second module, i.e., a carriage 20 not having any drive motor and being forcibly guided along the handling line 12 by the device 10 and/or a carriage 40, 60 having a drive 64, 42 for moving along the handling line 12 and/or rotating at the respective handling regions 14 (Claim 35).

The features of the presently claimed invention together with the accompanying advantages attained thereby are neither disclosed nor suggested by the applied art, for the following reasons.

Kreuzer fails to show combining a first module with different kinds of second modules. The device shown in Koga does not serve for surface treatment of workpieces, but for mounting a structural element to the bottom of a vehicle chassis. More particularly, Koga simply discloses support unit 9 suspended for attaching work W to a car body 1 separately suspended from a hanger 2, with the support unit 9 movably suspended from overhead rails 3a, 3b horizontally rotatable about pole 4 and vertically adjustable by parallel link mechanism 5. Accordingly, Koga also fails to disclose individual carriages 20,

40, 60 supporting vehicle chasses 22 as they move through the treatment stations. There is most certainly no suggestion in Koga different kinds of second modules, i.e., carriages or support structures for a vehicle chassis, could be combined with a first module, i.e., handling line.

Therefore neither Kreuzer nor Koga anticipates or renders obvious the present invention recited in any pending claim herein.

Concerning Claim 37 introduced herein (and the dependent claims therefrom), Kreuzer just discloses presence of individual mounting frames 7 or 81 supporting respective vehicle bodies 1 and which are secured and rotated upon respective supports at the various treatment stations, and with the mounting frames 7 simply returned to starting position on return rails 27 situated underneath the assembly line; presence of individually-moving carriages 20, 40, 60 supporting the respective vehicle chasses 22 and also being rotatable, are not shown in this reference, nor is there any suggestion of incorporating a variety of different types of carriages 20, 40, 60 as in the present invention.

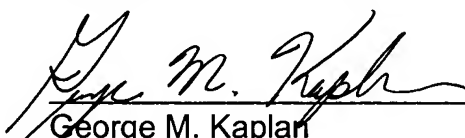
Koga fails to teach or suggest the invention recited in Claim 37 and the claims depending therefrom, for the reasons discussed *supra*. This pivoting about axis 68 provides, among other advantages, conserving space because the carriages 20, 40, 60 can be returned to start in upright position next to the treatment baths or regions 14 (pages 5-6 of the specification).

The remaining art of record has not been applied against the claims and will not be commented upon further at this time.

Accordingly, in view of the forgoing amendment and accompanying remarks, it is respectfully submitted all claims pending herein are in condition for allowance. Please contact the undersigned attorney should there be any questions. A Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement is enclosed herewith, together with a petition for an automatic two month extension of time for response under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) in triplicate, the petition fee and fee for additional claims introduced herein.

Early favorable action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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